



Legend: From right to left: 1992, on the Golan Heights, Tank Brig. General (res.) Avigdor Kehalani (standing), Major (res.) Ari Lipinski (standing in uniform), A Brig. General – commanding officer of the tank corps of Germany (sitting with a black beret) and IDF Deputy Chief of the Intelligence Corps with the rank of Brig. General (sitting without his beret).

The purpose of the meeting was to share with the important General from Germany Israel's strategic lessons from the massive armor battles of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. The terrible battle in October 1973 of just a small number of Israeli Centurion tanks at one crucial strategic valley in the northern Golan Heights stopping hundreds of the best Soviet made T-62 tanks and armored vehicles of the Syrian 7th and 4th Divisions cost so many casualties that the area was called the Valley of Tears (Emek haBacha in Hebrew). The sensational victory of the few tanks under battalion commander Lt. Col. Avigdor Kehalani and his success to halt for more than two and a half days with his small force the enormously overwhelming Syrian forces who were trying to invade Israel was unprecedented in military

history including the armor battles of WW II. Therefore, Israel chose to let the hero of that battle, Avigdor Kehalani, tell the story to the important guest from Europe during his visit in 1992. I, as an IDF Major (res.) escorted the German general during his whole visit in Israel and translated his professional discussions with the top Israeli officers.

After the war Avigdor Kehalani received the IDF Medal of Valor, the highest military decoration given for "performing a supreme act of valor in battle while facing the enemy and risking one's life". Kehalani had already received in 1967 the IDF Medal of Distinguished Service (the third most important medal of the IDF) given for "an outstanding and exemplary act of courage in battle" for his fight in the then Egyptian

Sinai Peninsula where he was severely wounded. He suffered burn wounds covering 60% of his body and went through 11 plastic surgeries. But after one year of medical treatments, he returned to serve as a tank battalion commander. In October 1973 Kehalani was the commander of Battalion 77 of the prestigious 7th Brigade of the IDF on the Golan Heights.

After having discussed the Yom Kippur battle on the Golan Heights in 1973 Kehalani told the German general the following story: A few weeks after the historic battle at the Valley of Tears there was a cease fire agreed between Israel and Syria. Then a famous American journalist who heard from NATO sources about the unprecedented story that merely a few Israeli tanks managed to rescue the North of Israel while being vastly outnumbered by Syrian armor forces, flew to Israel to interview the hero of that battle. So, he put his best tie on and met with Kehalani for the interview. After Kehalani had told him the story of the battle the journalist asked Kehalani: "Tell me please Mr. Kehalani, how could you, alone with just a few tanks, hold the position for two and a half days against such masses of hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles?"

Kahalani replied: "Excuse me, I think the question is wrong."

The journalist thought that maybe the Israeli officer was not fluent enough in English. So, he repeated the question very slowly (The journalist did not know that Kehalani had participated in advanced tank training courses in Texas and his English

was very good...): "Tell me please Mr. Kehalani, how could you, alone with just a few tanks, hold your important position for two and a half days against such masses of Syrian tanks?"

Kahalani responded again: "Excuse me, but I still think that your question is wrong."

The perplexed journalist said to Kehalani: "I was sent from New York to interview you, Mr. Kehalani, because I am famous for my good interview questions. What is wrong with my question?"

The German general listening to the story translated by me, asked Kehalani also:

"Well then, what was wrong with the question?"

And then Kehalani told the German general in 1992 what he had told the journalist back in 1973 and said that this was the most important part of that interview:

"Well, you see: We were not **alone** with merely a few tanks!"

And Kehalani pointed his hand to the heavens!

Both the journalist and the German general were reminded that the Jewish tank officer Avigdor Kehalani realized that the miracle of the survival was not due to him and his tanks **alone**, that they were not standing there **alone** with just a few tanks, but rather that it was the hand of **Providence** assisting them... The victory was possible not only thanks to technical tank fighting proficiency, or the courage and resilience of the troops, but was based on their spirit and faith that they were not alone!